



Epiphany

Every year, following the Feast of the Holy Nativity, we celebrate another wonderful feast called **Epiphany**. **Epiphany** means “*The Appearance*.” There was only one time in all of history when the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit appeared to us all at once. Here is the story...

Six months before our Lord Jesus Christ’s birth St John the Baptist was born. St John’s father was a priest named Zachariah and his mother’s name was St Elizabeth. (St Elizabeth was St Mary’s cousin and she was very old when St John the Baptist was born).

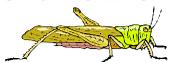
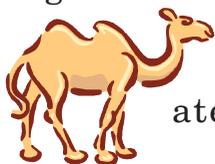
There was an evil king at the time of our Lord Jesus Christ’s birth that wanted to kill little baby Lord Jesus. The evil king’s name was Herod. King Herod wanted to kill all babies less than 2 years old because he thought one of the new babies will take his place as king (You can read the full story in the Holy Gospel according to St Matthew chapter 2). When the order was given to kill the little babies, St. John’s father took him to the temple and laid him on the altar of God.



When the soldiers came to kill St. John they couldn’t find him because the Angel of the Lord came down and took him to the desert.



St. John was being prepared to do a very important thing. He was going to prepare the way for our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry. So the angels raised St. John in the desert. When he was older, the time came for him to start his preaching. He wore a garment made from camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey as his food.



St. John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance. That means that people from all over the cities of Judea and Jerusalem came to St. John at the Jordan River confessing their sins to him and repenting of their sins. (*Remember that St. John could not forgive sins, only our Lord Jesus Christ can forgive sins. St. John was acting like our priest in Church when we go to confession.*)

When St John the Baptist preached he was very strong and was not afraid of anyone but spoke against the wrong things that were happening. Even when the king was sinning, St John stood up to him and told him to stop and to repent because the Kingdom of God is coming.

One day the Pharisees, the priests at the time of our Lord Jesus Christ, came to St. John and asked him, "Who are you?" He answered, "*I am not the Christ...I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the*



Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said” (John 1:22-23). (For you see, in the Old Testament there was a great prophet named Isaiah who prophesied about St John the Baptist and said that he was, **“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight” (Is. 40:3).**

So then the Pharisees asked, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ?” St. John replied, **“I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandals I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with fire and the Spirit” (John 1:25-27).**

The very next day, while St. John was baptizing in the Jordan River, our Lord Jesus Christ came to him to be baptized. When St. John saw our Lord Jesus Christ, he recognized Him and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”



Then he said to our Lord Jesus, “I have need to be baptized by You and You come to me?” St. John was amazed that our Lord Jesus Christ, who had no sin, would go to be baptized. St. John knew that he was the sinner and tells our Lord Jesus Christ that, **‘I need to be baptized by You.’**



But our Lord Jesus Christ said, “*Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*” What our Lord meant is that all things that are good we should do them. St. John’s baptism was good and so our Lord Jesus Christ went to be baptized. He was baptized because He also wanted to show us that we all need to be baptized.

You were also baptized. Ask your mom or dad and they may tell you all about the special day you were baptized.



When our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized an amazing thing happened. The heavens opened and St. John saw the Holy Spirit come down on the Lord Jesus Christ’s head in the form of a dove. At the same time, St. John heard the voice of God say, “***This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.***” This was the one and only time in all of history that the Holy Trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - appeared together. No time, EVER, did the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit appear at once except on this one very special day! This day is called **Epiphany**. Because it was such a special day we celebrate it every year in our Coptic Orthodox Church.